

Effective and Efficient Agent Development Can Increase Positive Productivity

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Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Problem Statement	4
Data Collection	5
Data Analysis	5-9
Summary	9-10
Appendix	11-12

Introduction

Effective and efficient agent development can increase productivity and provide customers with faster service, shorter wait times and reduce the number of abandoned calls when contacting the South Carolina Department of Motor Vehicles Contact Center. The South Carolina Department of Motor Vehicles (SCDMV) is a very important entity as it provides a major service to the citizens of South Carolina as well as other states.

Contacting the SCDMV is often unavoidable, as we provide customers with numerous official credentials such as identification cards and driver licenses. In addition to issuing customer credentials, we register and title vehicles, title mobile homes, issue golf cart permits and a host of other motor vehicle related services. With the amount of services the SCDMV provides, visiting a local office is not always convenient; so it is imperative we have a contact center that is able to assist and provide additional options to help in a timely manner.

The information should also be accurate and delivered professionally. In keeping with our agency statement to “deliver exceptional customer service and promote effective and efficient business processes, professional employees, innovative technology and strategic partnerships”, we are focusing on the amount of time customers are on the phone and the number of calls we lose because the customer disconnected. It is very important that each call we receive is answered correctly and that each customer feels their inquiry is most important and that we are eager to resolve his or her issue.

Problem Statement

The goal of this project is to determine if a new effective and efficient agent development program will achieve the following goals:

1. Increase the number of calls taken per agent.
2. Lower the talk time of the agents.
3. Decrease the number of abandoned calls for Unit three.

At the present time, we are experiencing a high volume of calls so if time permits, we will direct our focus to more one on one training and agent feedback sessions which allow us the opportunity to service observe calls and discuss solutions and outcomes. This will help us to determine when an agent lacks sufficient knowledge in a subject area or if the agent use of resources is lacking. The goal is to identify these problem areas before a complaint of sub-standard service is made.

If we are able to control the issues as they occur or prevent them altogether, this can help decrease the abandoned call rate. The more knowledgeable and confident the agent becomes, the more effective the delivery of responses to the customer's inquiry will be. In turn, the call will be shortened, allowing agents to service the next call within the goal time set for the customer contact center of three minutes and thirty seconds. The primary goal I have set for this project is to determine if the steps followed will produce positive results.

Data Collection

The statistics that are being measured are the agent talk time, number of calls, the amount of time the agents spend in Auxiliary (Aux) status daily and the number of calls that are abandoned as a result of increased wait time by the customer. If this goal of closely monitoring the agents calls and the amount of time it takes them to accurately answer each customer's inquiry is met, we should see the number of calls increase, the talk time stay below the set time of three minutes and thirty seconds and the abandoned calls should decrease.

The data used to analyze the performance trends will be measured by the Avaya Call Management System (CMS). This system allows us to select which data to measure and provides different methods in which to measure them. The data will be reviewed daily, monthly totals however, will be used to measure productivity. CMS will be used because it provides real-time monitoring and historical reports that allow us to view performance and determine the areas of our daily routine that are successful operations or those that need improvement. The expectations for each employee is to answer 100 calls per day. Agent talk time per call should be less than three minutes and thirty seconds. The amount of time spent in the AUX status should not exceed one hour and forty five minutes. The contact center is divided into three specialty skill groups but the data measured will be for agents who answer vehicle related questions.

Data Analysis

The data gathered over the past five months has fluctuated. While some agents exceeded our daily goal, others fell below our expectations. When reviewing agent talk times, it was determined that more were at or below our goal of three minutes, thirty seconds. The number of calls taken per person also showed that our agents were above our expected goal of one hundred calls per day. As for meeting our goal for the amount of time spent in AUX as a group, we were

not successful with meeting that goal. The data listed in figure 6-1 provides a breakdown on the performance metrics monitored and the information mined from these data points in CMS to gather and analyze in this project

Figure 6-1 Performance Metrics Data Table

OPERATIONAL DEFINITION	DESCRIPTION
Agent	Employee who answers calls
Talk Time	The amount of time the agent spends from the beginning to end of the customer's initial contact.
ACD Calls	The number of calls taken
Auxiliary (AUX)	Time an agent is unavailable to receive calls.
ACD Average	The average of the call time in the Avaya system for each agent

When reviewing the information daily and averaging the totals monthly, there was no significant change in the calls answered. The number of calls taken by each agent averaged around the same number monthly. The amount of time spent on each call increased some months along with the amount of time spent in AUX. There were several contributing factors to this problem. One of the causes for the increase in auxiliary time for Unit three was the receiving of new employees. Newer employees ask more questions as they are still learning how to perform the job, causing them to place customers on hold to receive assistance.

During the analysis period, unit three received two new employees. Although these employees received classroom training and sat with and observed one of our more knowledgeable agents, they still have questions about scenarios that were not covered or yet experienced. Another contributing factor to not meeting the expected goal for reduction of all areas, was an experimental change that assigned agents to more than one skill set. All areas were dealing with longer wait times and abandoned calls.

This experiment was conducted to see if we would be able to assist each area and lower the wait time for our customers. The problem with this change was most of the agents had not received any prior training on the other skills and the leads and supervisors were forced to train in the moment of customer contact instead of providing the individuals with the amount of sufficient training commonly provided to new employees assigned to a singular set skill.

Training in the moment equals longer talk times as this requires the agent to relay the customer's inquiry to you, then assist the agent with finding the answer and explain how to relay the information to the customer. This does not take into consideration the information is not effectual in improving the employee knowledge base because there is no time to ensure the agent understands the information they are delivering. These is problematic at best as the learning curve is perpetually extended by new scenarios.

The agents for unit three are trained to answer calls for vehicle related questions. With the added skills, this slowed down the agent talk time and amount of time spent in auxiliary (AUX) to seek guidance or information. The number of calls taken were not affected overall due to the amount of calls received. The trial period for taking multiple skills lasted for a month and we decided to go back to our original plan of taking one skill and allowing those agents that have knowledge of the other areas to assist whenever their main lines are not queuing with customers. The last and final contributing factor that played a role and is currently affecting the talk time and aux time is the repeat caller dynamic and escalated issues. These are attributed to backlogs from external processing units such as those presently experienced by the Titles and Registration department. These are the hindrances which lead to an increase of abandon calls.

Then Titles and Registration area is responsible for processing requests for customers attempting to renew and register new vehicles. Dealerships process multiple recurring transactions through this area; as well, it provides and accident reports and assists businesses with research information concerning abandoned vehicles. Those are just a few of the processes the Titles and Registration service area offers. These services are rightfully expected by citizens of South Carolina and states of varying jurisdiction across the nation. Although the backlog was due to inclement weather closings for Hurricane Matthew and holidays, businesses are still conducting transactions, customers are still soliciting the services and products of the SCDMV and the SCDMV is still expected to perform as usual.

As a result, unit three was and still is affected with the increase in calls and handle each situation as it comes. To assist with the call volume, the lead of unit three and supervisor take calls while assisting the team with their calls. In an attempt to help relieve the backlog in Titles and Registrations, the team has learned how to perform limited title functions. The team is now able to process some of the customer's request and avoid callbacks and escalations.

When necessary, unit three allows customers to send documentation to the team's attention to avoid prolonged waiting periods for processing paperwork that may have been previously rejected. This may occur because the customer was missing information needed to process the initial request. The titles department is currently working overtime, to include Saturdays, to reduce the backlog and process the customer transactions. All SCDMV units understand the stress of having a backlog so we are utilizing any downtime and Wednesday morning training to speak with the agents and provide them with helpful tips. Feedback is encouraged and solicited from them in areas of interest or concern with respect to how to make their jobs easier during this period.

One of the ways the units are working together to resolve this issue is to make sure we are utilizing our resources provided to perform our job. The contact center uses a customer contact history that allows our agents to notate interactions when customers call, the types of inquiries made and the solution to the inquiry or information needed to complete their request. This system not only allows the unit agents to submit requests to the processing units that assist but we use it as a training tool to ensure our agents are answering the customers correctly and sending useful information to the areas that we request assistance from. Using the customer contact history, getting the agents properly trained and relieving ourselves of the backlog we are currently experiencing will help us meet our set goals.

Summary

From August to December I have closely monitored the agents talk time, number of calls taken and the amount of time spent in auxiliary. The figures contained in appendix A chart the results of the project analysis. Overall the agents met the established goal of one hundred calls per day and stayed within the talk time of three minutes and thirty seconds. The time spent in AUX is where we saw the increase. The allotted time established for aux is one hour and forty five minutes. This time standard is established to cover two fifteen minute breaks, one hour for lunch, six minutes of personal time and nine minutes of auxiliary time for research and assistance.

The alternate theory tested a different approach on how to lower the abandon calls by having agents take multiple skill calls which was not successful. This approach presented challenges as it required more time in auxiliary status to request assistance. However it did not provide for training the agents in new skill sets required to respond to all customer inquiries. This presented no opportunity to measure and decrease the learning curve since it only provided

an answer to the questions in the moment. Experiencing the backlog in the Titles & Registration department caused our call volume to increase as we experience repeat callers inquiring about the status of their transactions not yet processed. The information gathered for this project was helpful as it will be used as a reference to discuss the number of calls abandoned and the factors that contributed to this issue. From the data gathered and the overall outcome of this experiment we can explore a few ideas on how to improve our overall performance. We can consider extending the amount of time new employees receive training. This will allow more in depth classroom training and lengthen the time observing our seasoned employees. As for our mature agents we will extend the amount of used monitoring their overall performance. Create peer groups were they can help assist each other with questions or scenarios that will help make performing their jobs easier. This information will also serve as an example of how a change in the process design or reengineering a process can affect the overall performance of all areas involved.

APPENDIX A

Figure A-1 ACD Call Volume and Time for Unit 3

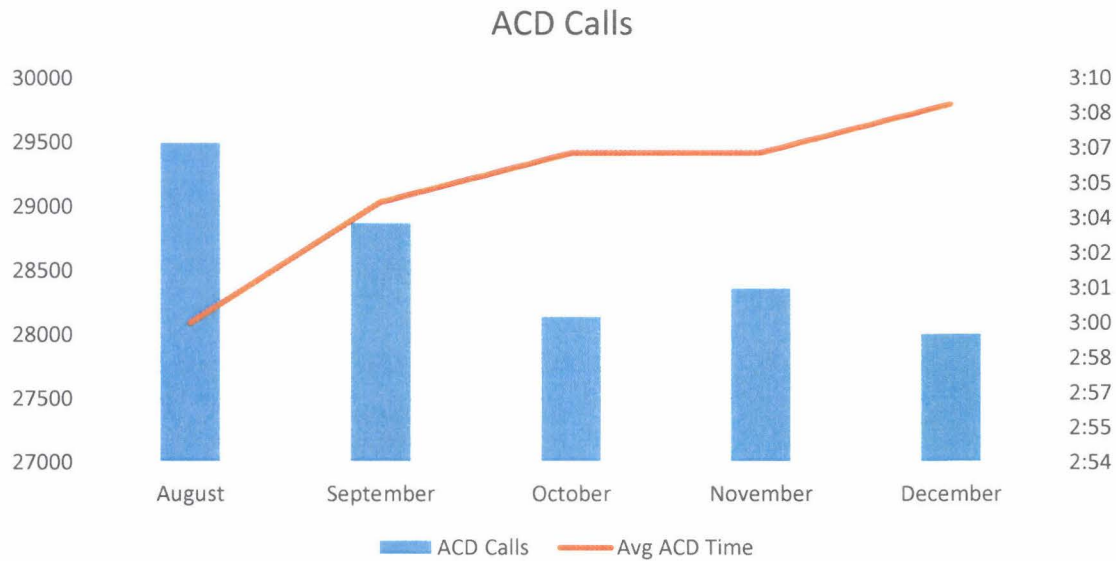


Figure A-2 Agent Population sample for ACD Time

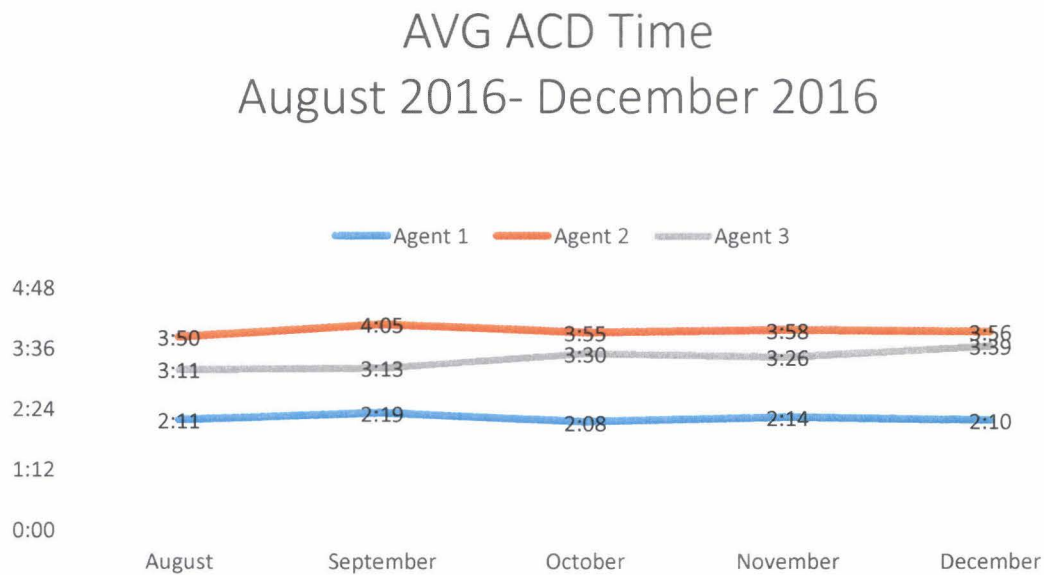


Figure A-3 Agent Population sample for ACD Calls

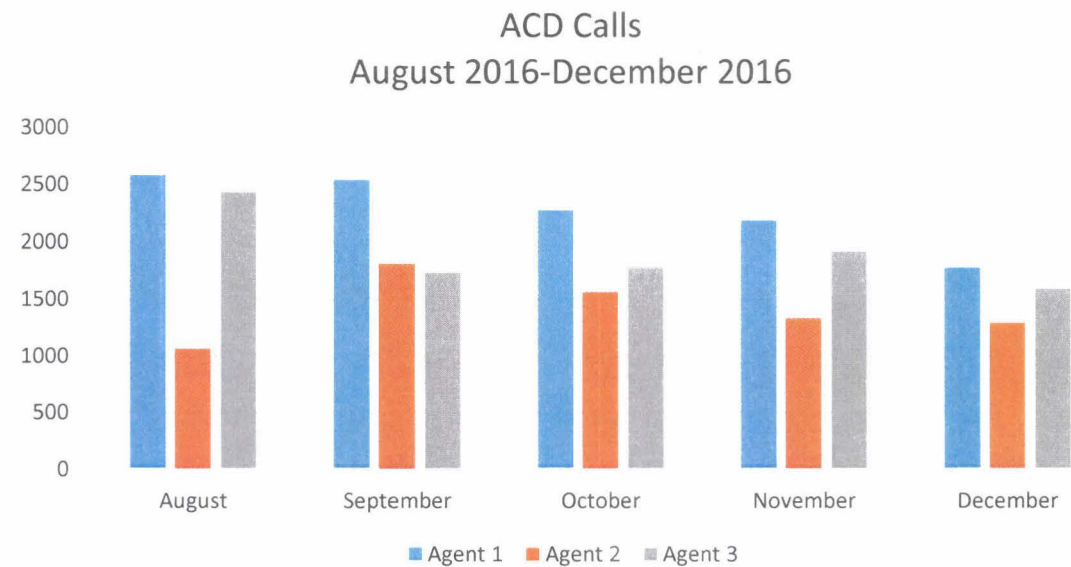


Figure A-4 Agent Population sample for AUX Time

